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Virginia Hill Country Residents Warmly Welcome Powers Home

BIG STONE GAP, Va., March 12 (AP)—U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers received a warm welcome today at a homecoming celebration in his native hill country.

Powers, visiting his parents' home at nearby Pound for the first time since his release from a Russian prison, had planned to shop in Norton for a new suit this morning, but curious crowds forced him to shelve the idea.

Then, he joined a small motor-

cade to the National Guard armory here, where local officials welcomed him back to mountainous southwest Virginia.

Most of the 49,000 Wise county residents do not know Powers personally, for he lived in the Pound area only briefly. He spent more time in nearby Jenkins, Ky., and in Grundy, Va., where he went to high school.

But the residents do know Powers's father, Oliver Powers, a Norton cobbler.

Francis Powers arrived early Sunday after a drive from Washington. He spent the rest of the morning chatting with his family, got two hours' sleep, and was up again.

After a home-cooked turkey dinner last night, the U-2 pilot said "there are no words to describe" his feeling at revisiting his home. He said it was the first time he and his five sisters had been together since 1933.

The homecoming celebration was brought to the coal-mining town of Big Stone Gap because the armory, with room for 1500, offered the best facilities in the county.

Powers's wife, Mrs. Barbara Powers, was not on hand for the homecoming.

At Milledgeville, Ga., Mrs. Powers said she is waiting for her husband to come to Georgia. She has been living with her mother in Milledgeville since his plane went down.